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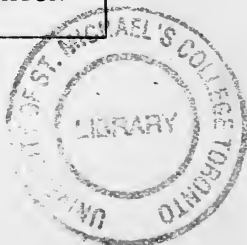
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THE CHURCH AND
WORSHIP

A

THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

It is difficult for Christians even in imagination to separate Christ and the Church. They think of it instinctively as His Church, and they know that the life by which it lives is sustained by Him. This makes them comparatively indifferent to that wild and irresponsible type of criticism which takes pleasure in asserting that Jesus

did not institute the Church, and that His whole interest was in the Kingdom of God, which is assumed to be another and a better thing for which the Church may well be abandoned. To some of the confusions in this we may recur; meanwhile it is only necessary to say that while we do not argue that any given Church can appeal to Jesus as the author of its characteristic doctrine or constitution, the connection of the Church as such with Jesus is as certain as anything in human experi-

ence. It is not fancy, but fact, that Jesus chose the Twelve, and that the testimony of the apostles to the Lord gathered those who received it into a fellowship of faith, hope, and love around His name—a communion of saints. The souls to whom the Gospel brought in living experience the forgiveness of sins, the life of the Spirit, and the assurance of immortality, could not stand apart from each other; they were united from the beginning, and had no choice but to unite, in a new and divine

fellowship. It is a question of words whether we say this fellowship was instituted by Christ. When we think of the Apostles and the Sacraments it seems true and proper to say it was. But even if historical pedantry cavils at the word, it is impossible to question that it was constituted by Christ, and that is the main thing. From its birth the Church has been a Church in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it must never deny its origin.

To say this, however, is to

say little. The primary function of the Church is to assert its origin ; it is to bear witness to Christ as the author of all the blessings it enjoys. Its first duty, as its primal impulse, is worship ; and worship is the adoring confession of the God revealed in Christ and possessed in the Spirit as the Redeemer of sinful men. There is nothing so characteristic of the Church's life as doxology. There is no Church at all if the voice of adoring praise falls silent, *Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins*

by His blood, and made us a kingdom and priests to His God and Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

The Church has a calling and duties undoubtedly, but it will never fulfil them except under the impulse of that life which has here its most urgent and spontaneous expression. It is concerned in the first instance not with what it has to do, but with what God has given to it and done for it. It is as men *beloved of God* that its members are *called to be saints*, and to criticise it on

any other assumption is beside the mark.

Often, as we know, it is so criticised. People to whom the Gospel is strange, and who owe Christ no such debt as inspired St. John, are naturally impatient of worship. If the Atonement and the Holy Spirit and the Resurrection Life are words without meaning, then the adoring response which they wake in Christian souls is meaningless too. But short of criticism like this, which rests on the rejection of the Gospel, there is in many quar-

ters of the Church itself an extraordinary want of appreciation for worship. It is seen in the sparse attendance at church services. It is seen in the perfunctoriness with which they are frequently gone through. It is seen in the absence of awe, solemnity, and elevation of feeling. It is seen sometimes when the worst manners, or want of manners, from the street are obtruded in what should be the sanctuary. It is seen whenever the common worship of the Church, instead of being an occasion on

which the souls of men are subdued and exalted by the consciousness of God their Saviour, is an occasion on which a clever man exerts all his cleverness to keep a congregation from wearying as they observe a decorous convention. It is seen in the elaboration of ritual and symbol to an extent which overpowers the spirit and defeats its own original purpose. But wherever it is seen, and however it is produced, it is an indication of something fundamentally and vitally wrong, and the

Church will never find the true line of duty till it finds anew the true relation to Christ, and recognises the adoring confession of its Lord as its first and dearest concern.

This is a point on which misconception is perhaps not unnatural. There is a great deal both in the Old Testament and the New which looks like a criticism of worship from the higher standpoint of ethics. *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, is a repeated and presumably a favourite quotation of Jesus. Often it has been used

to preach against worship—to disparage the Church and all that its common worship stands for, in comparison with something which is assumed to be of higher value. We venture to think there is much misunderstanding here. If the Church as we know it was crowded with people ostentatiously indifferent to morality and affectedly ardent in ritual observance, a prophetic criticism of its condition might be to the point; but where do we find such a state of affairs? Where is the congregation which has

a superstitious faith in the celebration of public worship, be the ritual meagre or elaborate, and an insensibility to moral demands? What is really needed in most churches is not the preaching down of worship as an empty formality in comparison with conduct, but the preaching of the sublime truths of the Gospel which will inspire a worship impassioned, spiritual, and sincere. In other words, what our circumstances require is not a prophetic, but an evangelic criticism of the prevalent wor-

ship ; not a demonstration that God requires the service of a righteous life, but a manifestation of what God has done for us in Christ, so true and so appealing that souls will kindle under it to adoring reverence and love. It may seem a hard saying, but in all probability a good part of the ethical preaching, as it is called, which so often disparages worship in the interest of morality, is due to the preacher's taking the line of least resistance. It is far easier to preach ethics than

religion. It is far easier to preach the law than to preach the Gospel. It is infinitely easier to tell men what they ought to do, and to tell them impressively, with penetration, good sense, and moral earnestness, than to tell them what God has done, and to do it with the awe, the tenderness, the profound sense of obligation, the consciousness of Christ's constraining love, the pledging of the heart to God and man, which so great a task requires. It is the highest and hardest of all callings to be an

evangelist, but it is the one on which the Church continually depends. It is not preaching ethics that produces religion, it is preaching the Gospel that begets a new life ; and it does so only as it quickens in the heart that adoring surrender to Christ, and confession of His Name, which are the soul of Christian worship.

It is implied in this that the contrast so commonly drawn between preaching and worship is one which cannot be pressed. It is often said by those who worship in churches where

preaching is at a discount, We do not go to church to hear sermons, we go to worship God. No doubt there are sermons which justify such comments, but that is where the error lies. If the preacher's message is what it ought to be—if he is really ministering the word of God to his people—they are inept. He cannot deliver it without worshipping; and what, as Mr. Spurgeon said, can more truly be described as worship than hearing the word of God as it demands to be heard—with faith, with reverence, with

penitence, with personal application, with self-dedication, with abandonment of the soul to God our Saviour? It does fill one with misgiving sometimes to see the titles of sermons announced in the Saturday papers. Much may be forgiven to earnestness, and to the desire to bring the careless by any means within the sound of the Gospel. But to shoot at folly as it flies, to preach on the sensation of the hour, and to do it with the over-emphasis of a generation fed on excitement, to fall back

on economical and political questions as though they had a reality which could not be claimed for God and the soul, sin and atonement, death and immortality, is not the way. There ought to be nothing in the preaching that is inconsistent with worship, nothing that does not promote it in its purest and most spiritual forms; and it would not only be an unspeakable blessing to congregations, but would save ministers many unhappy experiments, if this fundamental truth were realised.

One reason for common worship, if reason is needed in addition to the heart's instinctive impulse, may be added. The late Master of Balliol once said that there never had been an age in which there was so much Christianity outside of the churches as the present. Christianity is not always an easy word to interpret, and perhaps this saying is not quite clear. We all live in Christendom, and, as Canon Mozley said, have the benefit of an atmosphere. Possibly it is more impregnated with the

New Testament than it ever was, and makes more difference than it ever did even to those who stand aloof from the Church. Their debt to Christ, in other words, is greater than it would have been at any earlier period. But in their separation from the Church such Christians lose the means of measuring or acknowledging their debt. They are Christians in the sense of the historian—natives of Christendom, not of the Hindu or Mohammedan world, and with the benefit of the Christian atmosphere; but they are not

Christians in the sense of the New Testament. Often it may be said of them, as of the blind man in the Gospel, He that was healed wist not who it was. There is no doxology on their lips, no adoring confession of the Saviour, no overpowering necessity to join with all who owe the same debt to the same Redeemer, and to sing *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*. But the Christianity which is not powerful enough to produce this confession is a Christianity which does not give Christ the place which is His due. It is nebulous, inconclusive, and of

no value for witness bearing. Whatever it may do it cannot evangelise. The constraint to adore, and to unite in adoration, and the power to preach the Gospel, are parts of one whole. They are the things most vital to the Church, and most characteristic of it, and everything is misleading which would displace them for what are considered more pressing and more practical objects. Nothing else is so pressing or so practical for the Church of Christ.

THE CHURCH AND THE
GOSPEL

THE CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL

IF the spontaneous expression of the Church's life is worship, its first duty is to evangelise. The charge which Christ gave to the apostles He gave to them, as Dr. Hort has pointed out, not as officials, but as representative disciples; it is not an apostolic commission in any legal or technical sense, but the commission of the

Church. *Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* It is in conscious as well as instinctive obedience to this command that St. John writes, *What we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.* This is the Church's primary function, to bring others into that fellowship with God and

Christ in which it has found eternal life.

This function, evidently, can only be discharged by appealing to the individual. That the multiplication of Christian men will have important consequences for society is indisputable, but in the first instance the Gospel has nothing to do with society. It has to do with the soul. It has to do with God's interest in the soul, and with the possible interest of the soul in God. It has to tell what God is to the soul, and what the soul may be to

Him. Not infrequently we hear this criticised as a selfish and unworthy conception of the Christian religion: it invites men to concentrate attention on themselves, the very sin from which the Gospel has come to deliver them. Those who speak for Christ and the Church should make it their aim rather to take men's thoughts away from the paltry concern with their own souls and their salvation, which is only too natural to them; they should save them from this selfishness by interesting

them in the miseries and the wrongs of others. Sometimes this criticism strikes one as blatant and unintelligent, sometimes as affected and insincere, always as extraordinarily blind. It forgets that what is in question is the soul's relation to *God*, and that where God is there can be no selfishness. It is not selfish to be concerned about our relation to Him—so deeply concerned that till this is settled everything else is unreal ; it is not selfish, because it is vital. We can do nothing to help

others if we are ourselves as helpless as they. We cannot save any one from drowning if we are sinking by his side. If the Church's ministry of the Gospel does not bring souls one by one into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, it does nothing yet as it ought to do. It is quite fair in a sense to say that Christianity is service, but what many people seem willing to forget is that the great Servant is the Saviour, and that before we can do any service for Him we must

humble ourselves to accept the service He renders to us. He washed the disciples' feet—He insisted on doing so in spite of astonished protests—before He said to them, *Ye also ought to wash one another's feet.* To prevail with men one by one to become debtors to Christ for the service which none but Christ can render is the preliminary to all and every Christian service of others. And except with Christian service of others the Church of Christ has nothing to do.

Methods of evangelising may differ from one generation to another; and the variety of the New Testament, which is due partly to the variety in the experience of the writers, partly to their desire to bring the Gospel into effective contact with differing mental conditions, justifies the utmost freedom in this respect. Nothing is wrong that enables men to see Christ and to see themselves, and that urges upon the conscience the responsibilities involved in such vision. But there is one

danger that haunts the evangelist in his very eagerness to win men. It is the danger in one way or another of minimising the Gospel, and lapsing into the belief that its ends can be attained while the responsibilities involved in it have never been seriously faced. A man who is eager to persuade others, and to persuade himself that they have been persuaded—whose heart is sore at the thought of failure, who is afraid to think how the solemn things in Scripture apply to others because he

shrinks from applying them to himself—such a man is tempted to assimilate the new life to the old, to argue that the difference between the redeemed and the unredeemed, between the life that has surrendered to Christ in the obedience of faith, and the life self-centred, is a matter of words, or at best of less and more. He loses the sense which pervades the New Testament that it is a matter of life or death—the sense on which all power to preach the Gospel depends.

One of the most insinuating forms of this temptation is that which exaggerates the value to the Gospel of the Christian family. Christianity, it is pointed out, is naturalised in the world already; its best products are those which grow up unconsciously in Christian homes. There is no necessity there for evangelising, in the emphatic sense of the term: Christian nurture takes the place of preaching the Gospel. Without discounting in the least the value of Christian nurture, the Church needs to

remember that the Gospel remains supernatural, and that nature asserts itself against nurture everywhere. As some one says in George Eliot, breed is stronger than pasture; and the most carefully nurtured boy or girl comes to an hour in which the Gospel cannot be unconsciously inherited, but must be deliberately accepted as the supreme good and the supreme responsibility of the free and conscious spirit, or as deliberately renounced. It has to be remembered also that in a society like ours—a society in the main

of cities—one of the most constant moral phenomena is the weakening of tradition. Nothing is inherited as it is in the country. We may call it liberty or anarchy, but the continuity of the generations is impaired. The change affects everything, but it affects the family more than anything else. The family loses the power which it often possessed under simpler conditions of impressing its own character, and as a rule its religious tradition, upon its members. The community grows more potent and the

home less so ; it is society rather than domestic nurture which influences the boys and girls of our great cities, and who will say that its influence is evangelic ? Far oftener than was once the case we may look for even the best-bred children to become consciously Christian by a shock of reaction — the sense that they have been in contact with things they must forcibly repel if they are to have any Christian relation to Christ. And this will apply not only to what in the narrower sense

are moral situations, but to their view of life as a whole. There is something in Christ to which they must render a conscious as well as an unconditional submission; the responsibility is laid on them, to accept or to decline, of determining everything in their life not by the conventions of their circle, but by solemn reference to Him. They have to learn with open eyes and with minds wide awake what that word means: Whatsoever is not of *Faith* is sin.

Often, however, it is not a

misreading of the moral situation, but some misreading of the Gospel itself, which makes evangelising vain. The Gospel can be conceived as either a gift or a vocation, but whichever way is to be adopted in any given set of circumstances, it must be conceived greatly. If it is a gift, it is an unspeakable gift; if it is a calling, it is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. In any case, it stands to win by its magnitude, and to renounce or obscure its greatness is to cast the hope of victory away. Yet the temp-

tation to do this is ceaseless, and attacks the Church on opposite sides.

Sometimes it is the gift of God in the Gospel which is minimised. There is something staggering to the human mind in the preaching of the apostles. A Person such as the Gospels represent Jesus to be is too overpowering when we really begin to see Him, and to hear His voice as a voice addressing us. It literally deranges us—it throws our life off the intellectual and moral lines on which it has

been organising itself—when the sound of His words strikes into our hearts, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.* And when to the testimony of Jesus to Himself we add, not as something inconsistent with it, but as something which can be justified by appeal to it, the testimony of the apostles to Jesus, the impression made is deeper still. Could anything be more daunting to human intelligence than the New Testament interpretation of the death of Christ?

What a shock it gives to the mind when we first begin to think what is meant by Atonement! *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.* How did it ever enter the heart of man to assert so calmly a proposition so stupendous, that in Christ who died upon the cross there was a goodness which outweighed with God the sin of the world, and made it, for those who trusted Christ, as though it were not? The mind is too small for such thoughts, it is

too timid, it craves for something more proportioned to its grasp. Or it may be too proud for them, reluctant to own its need of a Mediator who can be its Advocate with the Father; it stumbles at the suggestion of such a debt to Christ. It is here the temptation of the evangelising Church comes in. It is to extenuate the unspeakable gift, to assimilate Christ to other men, to place Him in the ranks of the prophets, to discount the Atonement, and along with it the reality of sin and the cost of redemption to

God. It cannot be said too strongly that this is not the way of hope, but the way of despair. There are things that could never have been said at all, things indeed which could never have been conceived, unless they were true, and the great things of the Gospel are of this description. The wonder of them, the incredibility of them, if we like to call it so, the demand they make for an enlargement of human faculty to take in the unimagined greatness newly revealed by them in God, these

are the seal of their truth and the seat of their power. To make the Gospel as the gift of God less than it is in the New Testament is to appeal to men in vain.

It is the same when we think of it as a calling. There is a sense in which it is free, but it is never cheap; at least it never ought to be. Yet it is often cheapened. The question, What is a Christian? is discussed as though the object were to find the very lowest terms on which that noble name could be assumed. There

is always temptation for the Church to retain in some kind of connection with itself all whom it can possibly retain ; and when people show signs of drifting away, to modify the necessary minimum for good standing in its fellowship, as if this were the way to secure its position in the world. But this also is vain. It is the exact opposite of the line which was always followed by Jesus. He was compassionate and forbearing, as we do not know how to be ; He did not break the bruised reed nor quench

the glimmering wick ; but He demanded the utmost from all men, and He obtained what He demanded. He never bargained or negotiated with men ; His call was an affair of death or life, and He would never speak of it except on that footing. *If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross.* The soul cannot be bribed to this—if it could be, it would not be the Gospel ; but it can accept the challenge. There is a capacity for sacrifice in men to which the Gospel is

designed to appeal ; but when it is cheapened so that this appeal can no longer be made, the cause of the Gospel itself has been betrayed. Men do not want a salvation which costs God nothing and which costs them nothing ; they know that such a salvation is nothing worth.

The kind of testimony to Christ which wins men one by one to commit themselves to God's redeeming love in Him, and to meet His challenge to a life of self-renunciation, is the

Church's chief end. As *Ecce Homo* has it, the article of conversion is the article by which the Church stands or falls. It is easy for an eloquent man to gather an audience, it is another matter to build up a church adoring, constant, and self-devoted. It is not eloquence which does this, nor negotiation, nor knowledge of human nature, but the Gospel and the Spirit of God. Other institutions may serve other purposes, but no institution except one which possesses the Gospel and the Spirit can

serve this purpose ; and accordingly the Church must keep its separate place and calling as long as sinful men are alive upon the earth.



THE CHURCH AND
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

PROTESTANT theology used to give three marks of the true Church. It was a society in which the Gospel was truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and discipline duly exercised. The last has puzzled many people. To some it conveyed no meaning at all ; to others it only brought to mind painful and unedifying

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transactions in which the Church, having apparently proved the Gospel ineffective, relapsed for a moment to the level of law. Yet unintelligible or repellent as it may be, this third mark of the true Church is in its way as important as the others. The Church can only be identified in a society in which a sustained effort is made to raise life to the proper Christian level and to keep it there. The exercise of discipline is not an intermittent function of Church life any more than the preach-

ing of the Gospel or the administration of the sacraments. It goes on all the time. It is not only surgical but educative. It is the ceaseless and effective reaction of the common Christian conscience against everything in the life of the Church which is inconsistent with its calling or unworthy of it.

Here, it cannot be disputed, is one of the Church's chief concerns. The Church is not in the first instance an ethical society, but a religious community. But ethical powers

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and ideals are implicit in its religion. Its members, who are what they are as people *beloved of God*, know that in that very love they are *called to be saints*. It is their duty, as members of the Church, to live out this high calling wherever it finds them. It is one of the primary certainties of faith, as the New Testament reveals it, that it is possible to do so. The world is reluctant, tyrannical, omnipresent, but we can assert the new life and fulfil the Christian calling in spite of it; we are more than

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER 61

conquerors through Him who loved us.

There are many reasons why the third mark of the true Church has failed to get its due, and why the members of the Church are spiritually so undistinguished as they are. For one thing, it is easier to profess the true creed or to come to the Lord's table than to live the life to which they pledge us. For another, when the Church has reacted against unworthy lives, as, to do her justice, she has sometimes tried to do, it has often been through

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legal forms ; and as Dr. Hatch long ago pointed out in commenting on the rigorous discipline of the early Church, the virtues which can be rewarded and the vices which can be punished by external discipline are not, as a rule, the virtues and the vices that make or mar the soul. It was too often possible for those who were 'disciplined' to feel that, guilty though they were, those who sat in judgment on them might have the greater sin. The naturalising, also, of Christianity in the world, the forma-

tion of what we call Christendom, the existence of nations in which every one was supposed to be a Christian by birth, all worked in the same direction. The Christian standard was that of the Christian world, which means that there was no standard at all. *Le monde fait ce qui se fait*, and gets on well enough at its own level ; but when the Church begins to do this it has renounced its calling. Or, rather, it has forgotten that it has a calling, and that it must live, not in equilibrium with

its environment, but in devotion to its Lord ; not conforming, but inspired. True Christian character is the rarest of human phenomena, because it must be at once original, spontaneous, human, and divine.

Nothing shows more curiously how far the common Christian mind has lapsed from the New Testament than the expression we sometimes hear, ' Of course, I don't pretend to be a saint.' A Christian should not pretend anything ; but surely Christians are *called* to be saints, and are bound to take

their calling seriously. It is one of the unfortunate survivals of Roman Catholicism that evangelical Christians themselves often speak and act as if the saints were only to be a select minority in the Church, a minority to a place in which they would not presume to aspire. But in the New Testament there is no difference between a saint and a Christian. All who are beloved of God are called to be saints. It is bad for the conception of saintliness, as well as bad for the believers of the rank and file

who renounce it, when this distinction is drawn. The saint becomes insipid, and the Christian shades swiftly into the natural man. Some years ago Mr. Coventry Patmore drew the picture of the saint in the following lines: 'The saint has no fads; and you may live in the same house with him and never find out that he is not a sinner like yourself, unless you rely on negative proofs, or obtrude lax ideas on him, and so provoke him to silence. He may impress you, indeed, by his harmless-

ness and imperturbable temper, and probably by some lack of appreciation of modern humour, and ignorance of some things which men are expected to know, and by never seeming to have much use for his time when it can be of any service to you ; but, on the whole, he will give you an agreeable impression of general inferiority to yourself.' Even when we discount the good-natured mockery, and the special purpose in this, it is unfair to the saint. It is too negative and bloodless. There is nothing

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inspired in the character, and it was certainly not drawn from St. Peter or St. Paul or St. John. The average Christian, who is prepared to admit that he is no better than he should be, does not find in such a picture the attraction or the authority of a divine calling; if it puzzles him a little, it leaves him where he was. How is he to find the guidance and the inspiration which he needs?

It is a mistake, if we have in view the production of Christian character, to operate

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER 69

too much with categories like 'the ideal.' The ideal is not a religious, but a philosophical conception. Its affinities are with the law rather than with the Gospel, and where great play is made with it the moral temper which is fostered is not characteristically Christian. It is a mistake even to operate too much with the example of Jesus. Jesus did leave us an example that we should follow in His steps, but we do not see what we are called to be by looking at Him, as we see an external object with the bodily

eye. The *imitatio Christi* which aims at a literal reproduction of the life of Jesus may be completely beside the mark. Renan spoke of the *Imitatio* of A'Kempis as the most Christian of books, next to the Gospels, yet it is hardly too much to say that there is not a Christian book so utterly unlike the Gospels. It is a book of the cloister from beginning to end; not a word of it could have been conceived or written in the open air. Not a word of the Gospels could have been conceived or written

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER 71

anywhere else. The only Person whom the New Testament calls the Saint of God lived in the fields and in the streets, mingling in the common life of man at the common level; and what strikes us most as we contemplate Him is not a monotonous and conventionally expressed sanctity, however deeply felt, but the spontaneity, the liberty, the unexpectedness, and yet the thorough naturalness of such a life. It is something akin to this, or rather it is this itself, and nothing less or else, that the dis-

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cipline of the Church has to evoke in its members. And again we ask, How is it to be done?

There is only one way to do it. True character is only produced by the sense of responsibility acting freely in the human spirit. It is never produced by devotion to an ideal which is simply given, or by following an example as mechanically as a schoolboy copies a headline. It is not, if we may put it so, seen before it is produced; it is seen only as it is produced by the spontaneous action

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of the soul under the sense of the responsibilities which its situation puts upon it. Any type of character which lacks the spontaneity and originality thus secured is far short of the highest. It will not tell on the environment as genuine goodness should. It may seem for a little to maintain the equilibrium in the moral world, but it will never initiate advance. Part of what repels unsophisticated moral natures from the Church is the feeling that among professing Christians goodness has lost its

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virtue ; it has degenerated into conventional ways of being good or doing good which produce no reaction in the world because there was no original action in them. Where accusations like these are just, to a greater or less extent, there is no remedy but the one just indicated. As all real character is produced by the sense of responsibility, so all real Christian character is produced by the sense of responsibility to Christ. Responsibility makes men, responsibility to Christ makes

saints. It makes them when it is freely and unreservedly undertaken by individuals in the position in which the call of God has come to them.

At the present moment there is nothing more urgently needed in the Church than the revival of personal responsibility in this distinctively Christian sense. Many of the influences of the last generation, both scientific and philosophic, have tended to deaden it. The individual has been lost in his heredity and environment; the key to what he is has been sought in

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nature and in history, not in the living God and the living soul. It is no use looking for saints along this line. They are not the product of heredity and environment ; they are produced one by one, free, original, unparalleled phenomena, as individual souls, conscious of their obligations to the Redeemer, face their life from moment to moment in the sense of what they owe to Him. The world cannot make saints and neither can the cloister. In the only form in which they are worth having, as Christian

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER 77

men who live their life out in the common field of the world, naturally, effectively, and freely, they are made only in one way : they are made as men face their personal responsibilities in presence of the Cross and the Judgment-seat of Christ. It is there we find out what Christians are bound to do, and dare do ; it is there we find the true import of the calling to besaints. It is the duty of the Church through all its ministries to keep up a ceaseless pressure on the conscience of its members, not to realise this ideal—there

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is no ideal in the case—but to recognise these realities. The Cross of Christ and his Judgment-seat are the powers which make saints, and it is the solemn acceptance of responsibility as fixed for us by these divine realities, and not the preaching of ideals, which will evoke in human souls a life correspondingly Christian and real. It will be different in all men, as different as their natures and their situations; but no one will ever think it insipid or put on.

All the more because we live

in a period of social movements is this intensive Christianity wanted. It is not only wanted, it should be insisted upon as the normal type. It is not some Christians but all who are called to be saints. The coteries and conventions which devote themselves to the deepening of the spiritual life may often be on the wrong track, but there is always something right in their motive. The revelation of God in Christ, the Redeemer and Judge of men, is great beyond all our thoughts, and was designed to

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produce something far more wonderful than we see in most so-called Christian lives. Whatever we may think of Wesley's idea of perfection, he was right in setting his heart on perfection. Christ is able to do, and desires to do, no less for His people than to enable them to fulfil their calling to be saints. It cannot be fulfilled in a day or an hour, but it is never to be renounced. It is never to be abandoned for the moral commonplace either of the Church or of the world. It is the calling of every Christian, on his own

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responsibility, to stand before the Cross and the Judgment-seat of Christ, and to listen there for the answer to the question, Lord, what wilt *Thou* have *me* to do?



THE CHURCH AND THE
KINGDOM OF GOD



THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

No contrast is more familiar to hostile critics of the Church than that of the Church and the Kingdom of God. It seems made for their purpose. Jesus, we are told, spoke incessantly of the Kingdom, and rarely, if at all, of the Church. The Church is an institution, the Kingdom is a divine ideal. The Church is often as narrow and

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exclusive as bigotry and Pharisaism can make it; the Kingdom is as wide and generous as the divine interest in man. The Church is ecclesiastical, the Kingdom is human and divine. The Church has had its day; let us turn from it and devote all our energies to the establishment of the Kingdom.

Those who so speak no doubt have in their minds an idea of what they mean by the Kingdom, but whether it is what Jesus meant is another matter. It is easy to come to the Gos-

pels with minds so obsessed by our own ideas that we hardly see what is there. Careful study of the Gospels has brought into high relief the fact that the Kingdom, as Jesus conceived it, is not to be established by our energies at all. It is not a Kingdom of this world; it is the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of God. It is a transcendent Kingdom, which comes suddenly, like a thief in the night, or like the lightning flash which illumines the sky in an instant from east to west. We have not to work

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for it, or to set it up by our efforts ; we have to wait for it, to be ready for it, to make any sacrifice to secure our entrance into it. There is something in it which cannot even be suggested except by words like heaven and immortality ; those who are accounted worthy of it neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God ; Jesus in the face of death consoles His disciples by the thought that He will drink the wine new with them in the Kingdom of His Father.

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Speaking generally, the Kingdom for which Jesus looked has this transcendent supernatural character. It is not to be built up by the devotion of men, it is to come in an instant by the decisive interposition of God. The spiritual temper of the Gospels agrees with this. The tension of which we are conscious in their presentation of Jesus, the infinite hope that throbs in them, the assurance of something at hand so sublime that in presence of it everything else vanishes—the earth and the

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heaven flee away, and there is found no place for them: all this is in one key with Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God. But is it in harmony with what is generally meant now when people speak of the Kingdom, and contrast it with the Church? Or have they in their minds a conception of the Kingdom which is all their own, and can make no direct appeal to the teaching of Jesus?

At present it hardly seems doubtful that the latter alternative is the true one. Often

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we hear the expression, 'the Kingdom of God upon earth,' and it seems invariably to mean a Christianised natural society. It is this world in which we live, this natural and social order, pervaded by the spirit of Jesus, and no doubt to a large extent remodelled and reorganised by that spirit, which is meant by the Kingdom of God. It is life as we live it here, only with economic and social changes such as the Gospel demands, and the principal business of the disciples of Jesus is to devote themselves

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to bring about these changes. It is not to be disputed that in Jesus and His teaching we can find lessons for the true ordering of society as well as of individual life. True, we find them as a rule only by inference, or by a kind of indirect inspiration. There is no political, social, or economic legislation in the words of Jesus, any more than there is legislation upon science and art. And no matter how true our inspiration may be, no matter how heartily Jesus might commend our action in this field, it

is an unjustifiable mistake to identify it in any exclusive way with the Kingdom of God. Even if it makes the sovereignty of God effective within a certain area, there is nothing in it which answers in magnitude to the sublime hope of the Kingdom preached by Jesus. We have no right to contrast work of this kind with the work done by the worshipping, evangelising, and ethically educating Church, and to call it by contrast work done for the Kingdom of God. The peculiarly spiritual work done by the

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Church, individualising as it is in the first instance, is equally done for the Kingdom ; it may even have a more intimate relation to it than the other : but the Kingdom transcends both.

It is not trifling to insist that those who appeal from the Church to the Kingdom of God should face the sense in which Jesus used this term. If the Kingdom is man's chief end, as every one assumes it to be, it is vital that our conception of it should answer to His, and it is well worth while to point the possible contrasts here.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD 95

Those who understand by the Kingdom simply the Christianising of natural society, or the naturalising of Christianity in the world, are apt to lose the Gospel horizon. The supernatural origin of Christianity and its supernatural issues easily escape their consciousness. With their eyes on the iniquities of earth, and their hearts pledged to the rectification of them, they may speak with impatient scorn of a heaven beyond the stars, and demand some earnest of it here. Well, there is an earnest of it

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here. It comes home to the souls of men as they surrender to the Gospel, and become partakers in Christ with the Church. But the Christ in whom we so partake is the exalted Christ ; there is no faith in Him, no vision of Him, which does not bring immortality to light ; the Kingdom is one with Him ; it regains in the Church that transcendent and heavenly character which it bears in the Gospels, but which so readily vanishes in the streets. This transcendent and heavenly character of the

Kingdom it is essential to hold fast if we would be true to Jesus. The movements for social reform of which our time is so prolific do not need any justification ; they legitimate themselves to every one who has the contrast in his mind between the actual and the ideal. As far as the ideals which inspire men are inspired by Christ, they can be justified by appeal to Him ; but even when carried to the highest, they do not reach the height of His Kingdom, and they should not usurp its name.

When the Gospel horizon is lost, the spiritual temper of the Gospel is easily lost also. When the outlook to the future alters, so does the aspect of the present. As we set ourselves to Christianise the economic and political relations in which we live, and identify this process with the coming of the Kingdom of God, these relations themselves are apt to appear of enormous importance in our eyes. The present life, according to the teaching of Jesus, is of enormous importance, whatever its conditions

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may be : it is a scene in which men can make decisions of eternal consequence. But if we are to judge by what is on record of His teaching, Jesus laid little stress on the conditions being of one kind or another. He spoke with extraordinary solemnity of the spiritual perils of wealth — *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God* — but this is almost the only word He utters about any connection between the Kingdom and the outward conditions in which men live.

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Nothing could be more remote from His temper than the suggestion that if only all men had their rights — political, economical, educational — the Kingdom would have come. The whole conviction of Jesus about the Kingdom is allied rather to indifference about such things than to emphasising their importance. The Kingdom rather annuls them by its coming than comes through the transformation of them by the spirit of Jesus. There is a strong tendency to a kind of Christian secularism in much

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of the labour spent for what is called the Kingdom of God. There is love to men at the heart of it, and in that it comes from Jesus ; but in the stress it lays on worldly situations, in the vast consequence it attaches especially to unfavourable or unfair economic conditions, its connection with Jesus is open to question. It is not meant that He did not care for justice in such things, but only that in comparison with the Kingdom such things did not bulk in His eyes as they do in those of some modern apostles. We

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may think it right or wrong or peculiar, but the fact is not open to dispute, that His conception of the Kingdom of God made Jesus conspicuously indifferent to many things which at present are frequently identified with the Kingdom. He never had a vote ; He never had economic security ; He never had a right to work ; and He never spoke of these things to others. Priceless as we may think them—perhaps rightly, perhaps not—it can scarcely be argued that to magnify them is to preach the King-

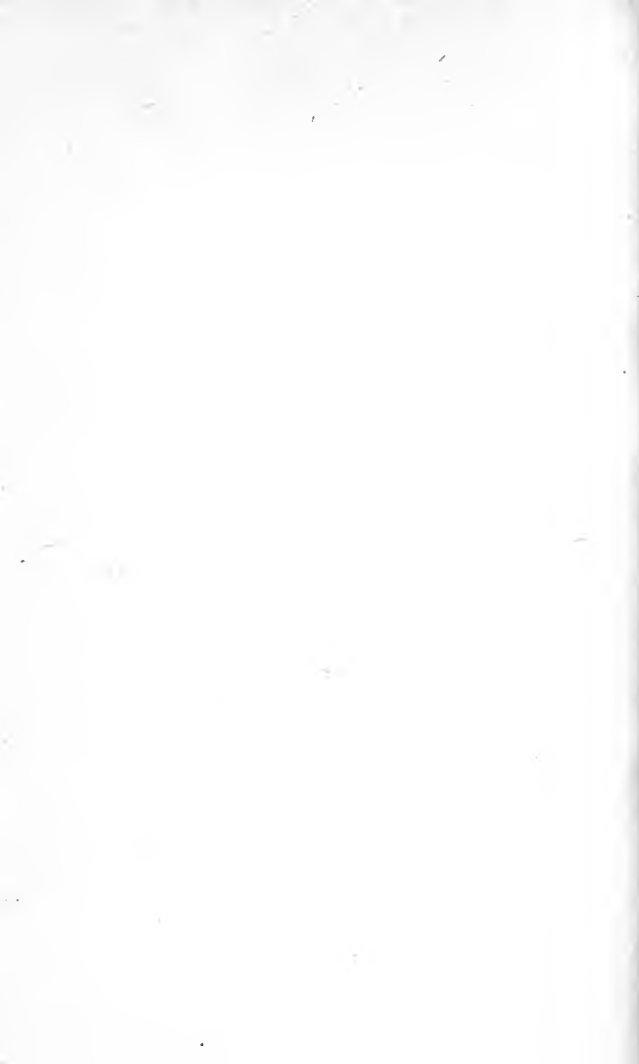
dom of God as He preached it.

Further, the horizon of life, as fixed by the hope of the Kingdom, and the spiritual temper corresponding to it, will determine to a large extent the methods and instruments to be used in our work for Christ. This is becoming an important question, not only for individual Christians, but for churches, and for the Church as a whole. Here, again, we cannot argue directly from Jesus to ourselves. We cannot say that as He never sought to

influence the legislature for any purpose, neither must we. This would be an instance of the mechanical imitation of Jesus, which we have already condemned. But we may recognise the truth that the ends in which Jesus is supremely interested are ethical ones, and that in ethics the end and the means must be of one piece. If it is His work we are doing, whatever precisely its relation to the Kingdom, the presumption must be in favour of methods akin to His. The probabilities surely are that

they will be methods working from within outward, and not from without inward—methods, in a word, of inspiration, not of legislation. We should hardly, with our minds full of the Gospels, anticipate the coming of the Kingdom through the House of Commons. But this is a question which, in its relation to the Church, we must reserve for future consideration.

THE CHURCH AND
LEGISLATION



THE CHURCH AND LEGISLATION

FAR as Christian men may be from agreeing in their conceptions of the Kingdom of God, and far as are many who talk much of it from apprehending the conception of Jesus, there is one point on which they all find it easy to unite. It is that every region of human life is to be Christianised. All the relations of men are to be

regulated—which in many cases means revolutionised — by the spirit of Jesus. Not only the life of the soul within, but all the activities of the man without, are to undergo this change. Trade and commerce, property, politics, social life in all its bearings, are to become manifestations of the mind of Christ. In the faith of Christians Christ fills all things, and He is to fill all things in fact. The question on which men's minds are not clear is what methods are open to the Church in working toward this

end. In particular they are not clear how far it is the duty of the Church to work directly for such legislative action as may contribute to its attainment.

We cannot appeal directly to the New Testament on this problem, and argue to our own duty from the conduct of Jesus and the Apostles. In New Testament times the State, in our sense of the term, did not exist; the responsibilities of citizenship could not be for primitive Christians what they are for us. Part of the diffi-

culty we have in determining the duty of the Church is due to the fact that in a modern European community the Church and the State to a large extent consist of the same persons, and thanks to the truth covered in the term Christendom, have to a large extent the same ends. Both of them want to see the same or similar results, and the question which confuses many Christians is how far, for the attainment of these results, the Church should directly aim at controlling the legislative

action of the State. Is the specific end which the Church has in view likely to be furthered when the Church devotes a great part of its energy to a programme which can only be carried through in Parliament?

It is easy to understand why many should think it will be. Impulsive and generous natures, moved to the depths by the vested interests of iniquity which trample on human souls, and convinced that nothing but force can sweep them away, are ready to appeal to

force. There is nothing they would not do to see this or that evil, which devastates the life of man, violently suppressed. They call loudly on the Church to join them in appeals to the legislature; sometimes they impeach the Church of insensibility, and of contemptuous disregard for the spirit of its Master, if it is slow to respond to their call. Perhaps it does not occur to them that legislation is force. To legislate is to take the sword, and while there is no doubt a power which has this

as its divinely appointed function, it may well cross the mind of the Church whether the function is hers. A Church which is acting on society mainly through its action on the State may well have misgivings. One of the most penetrating minds of the Scottish Church, at the period when it was beginning to realise what all its national contendings brought in their train — Halyburton, professor of divinity at St. Andrews—expressed his doubts of a religion mainly taken up with

State affairs ; and in his later years, as we know, similar doubts vexed a Christian so disinterested in his public spirit as Dr. Dale. There is certainly something in this to ponder. It is not necessarily what is wisest and best in us which believes in short cuts and compulsory methods. It is quite as probable as not that Jesus wished to correct this mis-directed ardour, when He said, *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

Age, according to Goethe,

makes us all quietists, but it is not age only which makes us sceptical about the law, or about legislative methods, in relation to the Kingdom of God. No doubt there are good laws and bad laws, laws which (so to speak) provide a good soil for the seed of the Kingdom by providing a sound environment for life to grow in; or which, on the other hand, maintain an environment practically fatal to any higher life. There are good laws and bad laws, and in a free country it is for the citizens to apply

their intelligence and conscience to the subject, and to make the laws as serviceable as they can be made to the common good. But all who have thought deeply about human affairs, or, to put it less arrogantly and more truly, all who have felt deeply with human beings, know that when the laws have done their utmost the whole work of the Church remains to be done. We do not need to be cynical, and say, with Tacitus, *corruptissima republica plurimae leges*, the multiplication of laws

measures the decay of the State. But who does not feel that the much experienced, deeply sympathising soul of a great and good man is revealed in the exquisite lines which Johnson contributed to Goldsmith's *Traveller*: 'How small, of all that human hearts endure, That part which laws or kings can cause or cure'? It is the large outstanding part with which the Church must always be mainly concerned. Of all the wonderful expressions in St. Paul, there is none which at the present moment

better merits reflection than that which stands at the head of the most glorious chapter in the New Testament — *What the Law could not do*. There is no reason for the tense: it may just as well be rendered in the present. *What the Law cannot do*—what no law can do, whether it issue from Sinai or from Westminster: *this* is the subject of the Gospel, and the main concern of the Church.

It is one drawback to the faith in legislation which seems to prevail in certain quarters

that it tends to throw into the background the things which should be central. Men look for a new heaven and a new earth to Acts of Parliament, and all the time sin and death are outstanding quantities, negligible remainders, apparently, to be thought about after the bills have been carried which are to make everything else new. A disposition is fostered which expects from law what law can never yield, and every advance in legislation is followed by a disappointment, not rarely by a

reaction. It is not sufficiently considered that the law, which registers the average sense of right and wrong in the community, is only a challenge to the ingenuity of the bad; it does nothing to make them good. Frame it as subtly as men will, it is only a document after all, and the chances are that the wild living intellect of man will get round it somehow. The Church's direct interest is not in framing Acts of Parliament, no matter how Christian their motive: it is in regenerating men, who will

give expression, indeed, to their new life, in their laws as in all their activities, but who, just because they are what they are in entire independence of the laws which they make, will have no vain expectations of what these laws will do for others.

It is another drawback to the Church's disposition to rely on what the State can do that it tends to introduce the temper and the antagonisms of the State into its own body, and to perplex rather than guide its members in their action as

citizens. A self-governing country is one in which the various interests of the citizens secure their rights by a continuous process of conflict and adjustment. It is a country governed by parties and by compromises between them. It is not accidental but inevitable that one of these parties should be more stationary and the other more progressive; that one should represent the experience (and the prejudices) of the people, the other its inspiration (and its fads). There is no reason why there

should not be Christians in both. It was a youthful indiscretion of Professor Drummond when he said that Liberalism is Christianity in politics. But when the Church identifies itself with this or that policy in legislation, what is the result? It is either that it becomes identified with one political party to the exclusion of the other—as if a man could not be a Christian and a Conservative, or a Christian and a Liberal, at the same time; or that it aspires to act in politics as

a non - partisan, or purely Christian party. Both have been seen. The writer has been present at the session of a church court 'on public questions,' which passed *nem. con.* a series of resolutions that would have been entirely appropriate at a Radical meeting ; the defence was that this was the attitude forced on it by another branch of the Church which consistently acted in the opposite sense. Whatever the cause, the result was surely deplorable, for the Church must lose fatally in its

power to affect public life if it does not number among its sincere and devoted members those who can carry its spirit into the organisations by which public life is inevitably controlled. As for a specifically Christian party, much as it has been talked of, it is hardly worth discussing. The existing parties have been naturally produced, and will be naturally maintained, by political causes, and like everything else in the world they are there to be Christianised. If they cannot be Christian-

ised, then politics is doomed to be an unchristian business; if they can, the specifically Christian party is superfluous. We may thankfully accept the latter alternative as the true one; for a party which failed to see that the natural organisation of political life in a free country had something inevitable in it could only degenerate into ineffective Pharisaism and pedantry.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the Church will not only do its immediately Christian duty best, but best serve

the State, if it leaves legislation to the institution to which in the Divine order it belongs. It lies properly within its duty to promote temperance, but it is as completely mistaken when it petitions for Mr. Asquith's bill as when it petitions for or against Mr. Balfour's. What is wanted is that its members act in either case with the sense of responsibility to Christ, not that the Church as a body identify itself with a given policy. It may be properly eager to close public-

houses : but what it has mainly to remember is that they would all close automatically, within the briefest of time limits, if nobody went in ; and that till they are closed so, the interests of the Kingdom of God are not sensibly affected one way or another. It may be properly interested in the material well-being of all men ; but it is no part of its function to support anybody's right-to-work bill. It needs more than good will to act in such things ; it needs an intelligence of conditions which it is no part of

the Church's business as a body to understand. The Church's business remains, it may be said, when economic security has been achieved. It is not economic security which is going to secure the Kingdom. It is some degree of insecurity—it is the painful necessity of being anxious about our livelihood—that generates the elementary virtues of industry and honesty on which the stability of society depends. If every man and woman in the British islands had a hundred pounds

a year absolutely secured, the real question would be, not whether the Kingdom of God had come, but whether the country was habitable for decent people. All concentration of mind on legal methods for attaining this or that end, even in the moral world, is indirectly prejudicial to Christian character, because it destroys the sense of moral proportion. The devotees of single virtues or blessings to be compassed by Act of Parliament are too often like men

who have forgotten a main article of the Christian Creed —I believe in the Holy Ghost.

**CRITICISING THE
CHURCH**



CRITICISING THE CHURCH

THE Church has a place in the Creed which we might expect to shield it at least from the criticism of its own members. Everything in the Creed is supernatural and divine, not only God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom Christians worship, but the Incarnation and the Atonement, the forgiveness of sins and the life

everlasting. The Church would have no title to its place in the Creed unless it also were divine and supernatural—unless as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, it owed its being and its calling to a power of God which neither nature nor humanity could explain. What, however, distinguishes the article of the Church from all the other articles in the Creed is that the Church is not only supernatural and divine, but is realised upon earth in natural and human forms ; and in these forms, such as they are, it can

be contrasted with what the Creed declares it truly is. It can be criticised through its own ideal, which is always the most telling kind of criticism. It can be criticised by its own members, and ungrateful as the task may be, it may nevertheless be a binding Christian duty. It can be criticised also, and often is, by people who have no conception of its nature, and who are angry with it, not because it fails to do what God has called it for, but because it will not lend itself to other objects in which

they happen to be interested.

Members of the Church who know what it is, and who realise what they owe to it, will not criticise it themselves in a vicious temper. Recognising the difference between the real Church of the present and the glorious ideal in which they believe, they will criticise it in the main by confessing its sins to God, accepting their own responsibility for them, and consecrating themselves anew to its service. They will hear without resentment, even

when they are unjust, the criticisms of outsiders ; and while unable to surrender their Christian knowledge of what the Church is and of what it ought to live for, they will not refuse to learn even from an enemy. Sometimes there is an outbreak in the State of anti-patriotic feeling. Parties appear, usually short lived, who seem to have no joy but in proving their country to be in the wrong. The same phenomenon is not unknown in the Church. But just as it broke the heart of a true

patriot like Pitt to be compelled to side against his country during the American war, so it should be the most painful experience for a Christian to find himself an alien in the Church, or compelled to raise his voice only in disapproval of what he sees.

The standing criticisms of the Church—those which can be urged in some degree at any time—are probably the most serious. They are that the Church does not answer to its ideal of holiness and unity. Its members may be called to

be saints, but they do not fulfil their calling. The saints are the people of God, those who carry His colours, and represent His cause in the world, but it is idle to speak of the members of the Church as a communion of saints. They are no such thing. Apart from their formal union in worship, they do not represent the cause of God as a distinguishable and separate interest among men, which is being carried to victory by their means; they have really no interests in life but those which they share with the non-

Christian. To speak of the supernatural and the divine in connection with them is to use words without meaning. So far as criticism like this is relevant, it is fatal. It cannot be countered by argument, it can only be refuted by turning to God. When we say that the Church must be holy, or that Christians are called to be saints, we mean that they are called to a divine life. The whole possibility of this lies in the fact that it is a calling. Christians are saints by vocation, not by adventure, or by

volunteering, or by whim, or by pride. Their vocation is the divine guarantee that holiness is within their reach. The life of God becomes an assured career for those who believe in the Redeemer, and there is nothing to do with this criticism but to fall back from all that justifies it, and to strengthen ourselves in Him.

The standing criticism of the Church's unity is by no means so serious. It is a sin and a scandal, undoubtedly, when Christians are divided from one another by unchristian tempers

—when, either as individuals or as communities, they regard each other with suspicion, jealousy, or dislike—when they treat each other as rivals, whose interest is to cut each other out of neutral markets, instead of as allies whose primary duty is to combine under the same Leader against a common foe. It is unhappily true that such unchristian tempers do prevail. They break the unity of the body of Christ, and are a sin which nothing can excuse. It is a scandal when those who call Jesus Lord unchurch each

other. But the criticism of the Church by those who have none but the Papal idea of unity in their minds is beside the mark. It is not a sin that while some English Christians are Episcopalian, others are Congregationalist, Presbyterian, or Methodist. The unity of the Church is not to be achieved by gathering all these into what the law would recognise as one *entité morale* ; they may be one in the only sense which the New Testament cares for without having one and the same legal constitution. They

may be one in the unity of the Spirit, one in participation in the same supernatural life, without being one in organisation. The body of Christ in the New Testament is vitally one; all the members in it live in each other, co-operate with each other, share each other's joys and sorrows; but there is no such thing in the New Testament as one all inclusive Christian corporation. Varieties of organisation are the necessary counterpart to the unity of the Spirit; the unity is shown to be real and effective

in proportion as it subdues all these varieties to itself, knitting men through them and over them in brotherly love to each other, and in devotion to the common ends of the gospel.

At the present time criticism of the Church is concentrated on two other points. On the one hand, there are multitudes who think, or profess to think, that membership in the Church is inconsistent with intellectual and even with spiritual freedom. They cannot bear the idea of a religion in which any-

thing comes to them through the mediation of others, and especially through the semi-authoritative mediation of a society. Men who know what intellectual liberty is in the pursuit of science often resent what they regard as the hostility to liberty in the Church. They instinctively suspect that in a tradition so venerable as that of Christianity there must be an immense amount of dead matter, and they decline to take any responsibility for it. 'Feeling and custom,' as it has been recently put, 'may cling

for long to ecclesiastical baptisms, weddings and funerals, but *conscious* Christianity no longer reckons with priestly mediation; in our thoughts of communion with God, sacraments, cults, and priest play no part.' It is astonishing how many powerful minds have taken this attitude to the Church, and continue to take it. The idea of a 'minister of religion' came to be an absolutely incredible idea to Milton, and he never went to church. Neither did Carlyle, for the same reason. We all

know his attitude to Hebrew old clothes. Like Schiller, because he was religious, he was of no denomination; he could only be religious, in the freedom of the spirit, by renouncing all the religions. In the same spirit, there is a whole school of German writers, whose influence is beginning to appear in our own country, and who are never weary of repeating that Jesus was a layman whose great achievement was to redeem men from the Church. It is not in loyalty to the Church, but in

independence of it that we prove our fidelity to Him. Discounting the juvenile petulance of some of the writers referred to, there is a self-complacency even about the greatest which does not commend itself as peculiarly Christian. Whatever high and fierce spirits like Milton and Carlyle may think, the world did not begin with them; there is such a thing as history, and all our best possessions are inherited; it is in the life of a society they are transmitted, and the common mother can

say to the proudest of her children, What hast thou that thou didst not receive? A nation can say this, and the Christian Church can say it. The great convictions which, as Carlyle was always telling us, alone impart eternal worth to the fleeting life of man are social convictions; they are the spiritual life of societies, and not of solitary souls; they are perpetuated and tell upon the world only as societies are organised around them, and it is as mistaken as it is ungrateful to assume the reverse. A

man may be disloyal to the Church to which he owes his highest spiritual faiths, just as he may be to the State to which he owes all his impulses of patriotism and of public duty, and the disloyalty is no more creditable in the one case than in the other. The Church must indeed beware of falling into bondage to her own past, and forgetting the living God; but against all such excesses of individualism she can fall back on the truth that the final guarantee that a spiritual conviction is sound

is that it has power to unite souls into a worshipping society and to transmit itself vitally from generation to generation.

But the most persistent and keenly felt criticism in our day is that which assails the Church on the ground of its ineffectiveness for what are called social ends. It is quite conceivable that those ends may not be legitimately within the Church's calling. Christ Himself was on various occasions asked to do things which he declined, no doubt to the disappointment and disgust of the peti-

tioners, and the experience of the Master may be revived in the disciples. But it is conceivable also that the Church is not as effective as it should be for ends which do lie within the will of Christ. It has certainly some work given it to do, and it is a fair question whether it is doing it with energy and success. God does not love the Church, Dr. Miller of Madras once said, He loves the world. God does love the Church, it might be said on the other hand, and His love to the world must largely be made

good through the Church's attitude to it. God has ends to attain in the world, as distinct from the Church—He has ideals to realise in the field of men's natural and social relations—to which the Church, we may be sure, should have an important contribution to make. It is always a serious question whether it is making it. Any particular criticism—than of an anti-Christian socialist, for example—may be unintelligent or unjust, while the questions it raises may be legitimate questions. The

legitimacy of criticism in this region was recognised by so stout a Churchman as Chalmers in his famous exclamation, What care I for the Free Church or for any Church, compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland? It is recognised in a more questionable shape by Harnack: Let him who has a denomination of his own be as though he had it not. That is, a church's end is not in itself, and one ought to sit loose to it except as an instrument for achieving ends apart from which it is of

no value. What we think of such criticism of the Church as takes this line will depend on our conception of the Church itself, of the calling assigned to it by Christ, of the resources with which He has endowed it, of the circumstances in which its lot is cast. The foregoing pages were written, not indeed with any intention of meeting particular criticisms, but in the hope of setting the subject as a whole in the light of New Testament principles.

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DENNEY, JAMES,
1856-1917.

THE CHURCH AND THE
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